Junior Jockeys (Age 3-6)

The main aim for Junior Jockeys (JJs) sessions is for the child to have fun and increase their confidence. It is important that coaches establish strong foundations in terms of position, balance and a pony centred approach.

At this level lessons will include:

Riding skills

* Mounting and dismounting safely with assistance.
* Learning how to hold, shorten and lengthen the reins.
* Learn the leg and rein aids to start, stop and turn a pony.
* Begin trotting and work towards rising trot.
* Develop balance and confidence through fun exercises and games.

Horsemanship skills

* Learn the names of the ponies
* Learn the words for the colours and markings of the ponies.
* Learn basic parts of the pony/saddle/bridle.
* Learn the pictures around the arena and their letter.
* Understand the importance of treating our ponies with kindness and how we can do that i.e. giving scratches, moving slowly, talking to them quietly.
* Begin to understand how to behave around horses.

Level 1 (Intro) Riders aged 6+

At this level the aim is to establish the fundamentals of a correct position in the saddle in halt, walk and trot and ensure that the riders understand the importance of this in terms of their safety and the horse’s comfort. Riders will be supported by a leader on the ground at this level.

At this level lessons will include:

Riding skills:

* Mounting and dismounting safely with assistance.
* Learn how to use basic leg, rein and body aids to start/stop/turn a pony sensitively and effectively.
* Learn how to sit correctly in the saddle.
* Learn how to hold the reins correctly and be able to shorten and lengthen them.
* Know how to ride a basic change of rein and some easy school movements (20 metre circle, figure of eight etc).
* Establishing a balanced rising trot without holding the saddle or neck strap.
* Be able to show some basic balance exercises in halt and walk.

Horsemanship skills:

* Understand that horses are a prey animal and how that effects their behaviour.
* Rider will begin to understand how their emotions can affect the horses.
* Understand positive and negative reinforcement as communication tools.
* Learn basic parts of the pony.
* Be able to identify basic parts of the saddle and bridle and know what they are for.
* Know the names for the different paces.

Level 2 (Beginner)

The aim at this level is for the rider to make sufficient progress in their balance, skill and confidence to be able to ride in walk and trot without a leader. This level will see some riders require leading and others able to ride more independently.

Lessons at this level will include:

Riding skills:

* Learn how to check a pony’s girth and know when it needs adjusting (assistance still needed to tighten it).
* Have some knowledge of the correct length of stirrup and be able to adjust these with assistance.
* Continue to develop rising trot so that it is established and in balance with the pony.
* Able to stand up in the stirrups in walk and maintain balance.
* Learn to ride serpentines, shallow loops and straight lines.
* Develop understanding of the aids to be able to start, stop and steer effectively with lightest possible pressures.
* Have some understanding of the need to keep safe distances.
* Learn to ride as lead file and the importance of a strong lead on the rest of the ride.

Horsemanship skills:

* Learning how to correctly lead the pony short distances e.g. to the mounting block.
* Learn how to read a horse’s basic body language.
* Learn about horse’s senses (sight, smell, hearing etc.) and how they differ to our own.
* Rider will learn how to notice if they are feeling worried or anxious and how they can help themselves to settle and be calm.
* Know the names for the variations within the paces.

Level 3 (Novice)

At this level riders are consistently off the lead rein (although may occasionally still require some assistance) and managing a variety of ponies independently in walk and trot. They will be working on their control and steering to enable them to work more independently. They will be progressing towards canter.

Lessons at this level will include:

Riding skills:

* Mounting with control (with assistance if required) and dismounting correctly and safely.
* Learning to adjust the girth (with assistance if required).
* Adjusting the stirrups with the foot remaining in the stirrup whilst mounted.
* Accurately riding a range of school movements in walk and trot.
* Begin to learn about riding on the correct diagonal in trot and how to change diagonal.
* Be able to show some sitting trot in transitions from walk to trot and trot to walk.
* Maintain balance when standing up in the stirrups for a few steps in walk and trot.
* Be able to ride a variety of horses effectively with clear, sympathetic aids and a more secure seat.
* Able to quicken or slow the speed of the walk or trot whilst staying in the same pace.
* An ability to consistently maintain safe distances.
* To be able to do some basic work independently e.g. turning across the arena to ride a transition away from the rest of the ride.
* Learn the aids for canter and how the rider’s body should move in canter.

Horsemanship skills:

* Understand that each horse is different and will require a different approach, beginning to recognise how they communicate how they feel.
* Develop techniques to remain calm even when things don’t go to plan.
* Know the footfalls of the walk, trot and canter.
* Know what horses eat.
* Rider will be able to prepare physically and mentally for riding.

Level 4 (Intermediate)

At this level riders should be capable and confident riding all movements in walk and trot. Riders at this level are developing balance and the skills of control in canter. This level needs to consolidate and improve the confidence skills that the rider has learnt to date.

Lessons at this level will include:

Riding:

* Riding more complex school movements accurately and in balance in walk and trot.
* Begin to ride in open order at times, understanding the school rules for safe passing.
* Be able to ride exercises independently to the rest of the group.
* Be able to explain and apply the aids to walk, trot, canter and turn.
* Riding in light seat.
* Be able to ride some lengthened and shortened strides.
* Begin to be able to understand and influence straightness, suppleness, bend, tempo.
* Be beginning to have some “feel” when riding to enable the rider to use effective aids to influence the horse’s way of going.

Horsemanship:

* Develop an ability to problem solve in a considerate, horse-centred way.
* Assess the horse’s mood and understand how they can help to create a positive mental state.
* Be able to name the points of the horse and the major bones.
* Understand how we can influence the horse’s posture through correct care, training and riding.
* Know how to tell if a horse is in good or poor health.
* Rider will begin to be able to take responsibility for own mood and mental state before riding.

Level 5 (Advanced)

At this level riders should be confident and capable in riding a range of horses. They should have a thorough understanding of how their riding will influence the horse. Riders should be able to affect the horse in a positive way using their seat and aids.

Lessons at this level will include:

* The ability to mount, check/adjust girth, check/adjust stirrups and dismount correctly without assistance.
* Be able to ride sitting trot for longer periods maintaining good balance and in harmony with the horse.
* Ride confidently in open order.
* Ability to ride schooling exercises in walk, trot or canter.
* Learning the correct aids for lateral movements and incorporating lateral work.
* Assessing the horse’s way of going and suggesting to the coach ways that they could improve the horse.
* An awareness of their own position and the ability to make positional adjustments.
* Riding in walk and trot without stirrups.

Horsemanship:

* Have an awareness of the main ‘schools’ of equitation and their differing approaches to training.
* Know the main muscles of the horse.
* Be able to identity over and underdeveloped muscles.
* Understand how to work towards creating a ‘good life’ for horses.
* Be able to understand how to work with a horse as a partner in riding.
* Rider will have developed strategies for managing their own emotional and mental state to ensure they can ride and communicate with their horse effectively